

Africa and India

Looking to the future together in a post-Covid-19 World

Luqman SAKA PhD 

Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ilorin
Political Science Unit, Division of Humanities, College of Arts and Sciences, University of the Gambia

Abstract

Indo-Africa relations steeped back into centuries of shared historical experiences. Underscoring Africa's importance, India instituted the India-Africa Summits as a platform to advance relations between the two partners. Given rising optimism of economic re-opening following the Covid-19 pandemic induced global lockdown, India has the opportunity to reinvent her relationships with Africa by deepening existing collaborations and breaking new frontiers. To this end, this article discusses the politics of Indo-Africa's relations and advance the need to forge closer beneficial relations between India and Africa by looking together to the future in a post-Covid-19 world.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, Diplomatic Relations, Economic Revival, India, Africa

Introduction

The connections between Africa and India dates back to many centuries and steeped in the rich history of the people of the Indian Ocean orbit. For centuries, Indian seafarers have crossed the Indian Ocean to trade with communities and people along the coast of modern Eastern and Southern Africa. Serving succession of imperial powers that control seafaring on the Indian Ocean across time, Indians established a strong presence in coastal cities and settlements along the south and east coast of Africa (Rao, 1973; Micklem, 2001; Robbins & McLeod, 2006; Afreximbank & Exim Bank, India, 2018; Ruchita, 2018). The commercial and economic ties between the people of Africa and India were solidified by activities of the British empire through the Imperial British East Africa Company and ultimately through colonialism.

The British colonial enterprise brought Indians into Africa to work for the Empire and the Crown resulting in the presence of Indian communities indigenous to the coast of South and East Africa. The early Indian sojourners in East Africa can aptly be characterized as the 'vanguard' in the context of Imperial British colonial expansion in the region (Jones, 2007, p. 19). The independence movements in colonial Africa were also strongly influenced by the independence of British India (present-day Bangladesh, India, & Pakistan). In the same manner, the shared history of colonial rule, the exploitation and iniquities that characterized both people's experiences helped to forge a consciousness of shared destiny and friendship in the post-colonial period (Jones, 2007; Hromnik, 1981).

The close relationship between Africa and India has grown in leaps and bounds as both sides continue to deepen it through diplomatic, political, security and economic agreements and engagements. The engagements between Africa and India transverse diverse issues and areas of human endeavours that include; agriculture, medicines, pharmaceuticals, sciences and technological innovations, manufacturing, energy (oil and gas), power generation, education, tourism, research and development among others (Krishna, 2010). While there are blights to Indo-Africa relations, in terms of people-to-people relationships notably as manifested by the criminal profiling of black Africans across major cities in India, the Indian state had consistently shown commitment to South-South cooperation and issues that affect Africa.

For India, the African continent has also been a strategic factor in foreign policy formulation and overall national interest consideration. Using the platforms of the Non-Aligned Movement and the G77 India has forged and deepened diplomatic relations with many African countries in the post-colonial era. Following the process of economic liberalization embarked upon by many African states in the 1990s, India has worked to deepen her economic relationship with Africa and aid Indian businesses and commercial dealings with the continent. Of strategic importance has been the institution of India-Africa Summits as platform to advance commerce and trade relations. Three of such summits were held in 2008, 2011 and 2015 respectively. With the Indian Ocean as a strategic thoroughfare, the need to protect merchant shipping in light of piracy activities in the Horn of Africa is clearer. India has placed a premium on ensuring security for seafarers and merchant ships in collaboration with partners in Africa (Wagner, 2019).

In the pre-pandemic period, India strategic engagement with Africa has been beneficial to Africa and economically lucrative to India. From investment in the energy sectors (oil and gas) to agriculture, information technology, medical and pharmaceutical and security cooperation and coordination, India has gradually emerged as a strategic partner and player in Africa's international politics. With the SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) pandemic and the blows to international trade, commerce and investment, India has opportunity to reinvent her relationship with Africa by deepening engagements in existing, pre-pandemic areas of cooperation, and break new frontiers of relationships in the post-Covid19 period. To this end, the article discusses the politics of India-Africa's relations focusing attention on areas of cooperation and collaboration before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. It also discusses the need to forge a strong relationship between India and Africa with the post-Covid-19 global politics era, in mind.

Exploring the nature and context of India-Africa relations before Covid-19

India's relations with Africa, whether at the bilateral or multilateral levels, have evolved in stages. Following India's independence in 1947, the country's post-colonial leaders expressed an unflinching commitment to the decolonization project. Within the context of aiding decolonization, India gave assistance and support to nationalist movements and leaders in Africa, especially in Eastern and Southern Africa. This commitment was intensified following attainment of independence by Ghana in 1957 and many other African states from 1960 onwards. At this stage, India sought to strengthen her commitment to and cooperation with Africa through the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

The diplomatic and political commitment given by India to Africa and the political relationship that evolved therefrom was largely a result of shared colonial historical experience. Re-stating this shared historical experience, former Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, was quoted to have averred thus, 'India will never forget Africa's role in inspiring our own struggle for national liberation. It was here that Mahatma Gandhi developed his political philosophy and developed the concepts of non-violence and peaceful resistance' (Abraham, 2008, p. 196). This feeling of shared experience under Imperial British colonialism was highly instrumental in shaping the position of Indian political leadership and India's foreign policy engagements with Africa through to the 1990s (Abraham, 2008; Sumit & Manjeet, 2009; Chakrabarty, 2016; Rajesh & Sullivan de Estrada, 2017; Ruchita, 2018). Indeed, it is on record that India is the first nation to agitate within the United Nations for the abolishment of the Apartheid regime in South Africa.

In the post-colonial era, India continued to demonstrate her commitment to the cause of South-South cooperation and by extension issues as it affects Africa. Following economic liberalization policies introduced by African states in the 1990s, Indian foreign policy objectives in Africa increasingly became more focused on deepening economic relations and advancing security cooperation. As relations on these two important fronts deepens along with other issue areas starting from the

1990s, India sought to create a distinctive multilateral platform that will be devoted to addressing India-Africa relations. To this end, India initiated the India-Africa Forum Summits (IAFS). The inaugural India-Africa diplomatic summit was held in New Delhi in 2008 (Chakrabarty, 2016).

Subsequent to the inaugural meeting, two other summits were held in Addis Ababa in 2011 and New Delhi in 2015. The fourth in the series of India-Africa Summits was earlier scheduled to be convened in India in September 2020, before the Covid-19 pandemic forced a global shutdown. Aside from the wider continental platform that the India-Africa summit represents, India has also deepened engagements with Africa through her structured relationships with the eight African Union recognized Regional Economic Communities (RECs). These platforms complement the bilateral relationship that India has struck up with individual African countries over the years (Arora and Chand, 2015). Some of the notable policies that had been launched to push bilateral relations include the Exim Bank's Focus Africa policy initiated in 2002; the Techno-Economic Approach for India-Africa Movement (TEAM); and the Pan African E-Network initiative among others.

Indo-Africa summit diplomacy was not limited to the formal government to government platform as represented by the official India-Africa summits, there is also a business and corporate platform that had evolved to promote, advance and push India economic and trade relations with Africa. The most visible of such platforms was the Indo-Africa Virtual Summit first held in 2020 and put together by the IMC Chamber of Commerce and Africa Business News Group (ABN Group). The second in the series of the virtual summit was held between 23 and 24 March 2021. The 2021 edition of the Indo-Africa Virtual Summit was attended by prominent industrialists and business people. Participants in the summit explored areas of common interest between Indian and African business and economic elite straddling important sectors that include; power and renewable energy, knowledge, skill and education, automobiles, agriculture and food processing, extractive industry, and health infrastructure among others (Hopin, 2021).

India's economic engagement and commercial relationships with Africa took an upward swing starting from the early 2000s. The volume of trade between India and Africa continues to grow thanks to trade initiatives such as the Focus Africa (2002), Duty-Free Tariff Preference Scheme (DFTP) for Least Developing Countries (2008), and the India-Africa Forum Summit. In addition to the aforementioned state-led initiatives, there is also the private sector driven initiatives like the Confederation of India Industries-Exim Bank Conclave on India Africa Project Partnership. These initiatives have contributed to the improvement in the volume of Indo-Africa trade and investment. While India and Africa strive to expand the basket of the respective partners' trade and commercial dealings across the Indian Ocean, India continued to export manufactured products to Africa while her imports from Africa are mainly in the form of energy (crude oil and natural gas), agricultural products and solid minerals (ferrous metals). While private Indian firms are driving trade, commercial and investment in Africa's agricultural sector, the Indian State has been the centre of India's trade, with a particular focus on investment in the energy sector. Leading the charge as vanguard for India's trade and investment in Africa energy sector has been the state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation-Videsh Limited (OVL). The OVL was established in 1996 to facilitate the acquisition of energy assets abroad (Chakrabarty, 2018, p. 3). Notable Indian corporations such as the Reliance Group, Varun Beverages, Bharti Airtel, Essar Group and TATA Group have committed significant investment into national economies in Africa, especially in Mauritius and other countries on the Indian Ocean coast.

Indeed, Indian investments in Africa continue to witness appreciable growth, with the country's multinational corporations leading its investment drive in Africa. For instance, the Vedanta Resources had investments in copper mines in Zambia, while the OVL has equity investment in oil and gas projects in Libya, Nigeria and Sudan (Ruchita, 2011, p. 7-8). Similarly, investment by Tata Group is found in many countries in Africa. In the same vein, the Bharti group bought off the assets of

telecommunication giant Zain in 2010 in a deal worth around USD10 billion. The Kirloskar Brothers and Mahindra group also have business engagements and investments in a number of countries across Africa (Ruchita, 2011). Indeed, Indian corporations, firms and businesses continue their penetration of African economies, seeking new business frontiers. While China and Chinese business interests have become imbedded in Africa, Indian corporations are also engraving their footprints on the continent's economic landscape. The scale and pace of China and India's investment and trade with Africa are on a new pedestal and unprecedented (Broadman, 2007, p. 1).

Although hundreds of Indian companies and business entities engage in trade, commercial dealings and investment in Africa, there are about 11 companies that account for nearly 80 percent of the total Indian trade and investment flows to Africa between 2008 to 2016. OVL occupies the top spot with investments worth USD3.019 billion representing 59.8 percent of total Indian firms' investment in Africa, excluding in Mauritius. This is followed by Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation, USD319.7 million, Interlabels Industries USD121.4 million, Oil India Limited USD105.4 million, Coromandel USD97.5 million, The Indian Hotels Co Ltd USD93.8 million, Gujarat State Fertilizers & Chemicals USD92.9 million, Varun Beverages USD74.7 million, TATA Steel USD65.3 million, TATA International USD63.0 million and TATA Power USD48.8 million (Chakrabarty, 2018, p. 8-11). One major characteristic of Indian firms operating in Africa is that most of them have not expanded their operations and investment reach outside of one or two countries, with the exception of the oil and gas giant OVL and TATA.

Table 1: Geographical spread of Major Indian Companies in Africa and their area of Operations

| S/No | Company Name | Countries of Operations | Sector's & Portfolio in US\$ m |
|------|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| | ONGC Videsh (OVL) | Congo, Egypt, Ivory Coast, Libya, Mozambique & Sudan | Oil & Natural Gas (3,019.1 m) |
| | Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation | Egypt | Oil & Natural Gas (319.7 m) |
| | Interlabels Industries | Kenya | Manufacturing (121.4 m) |
| | Oil India Limited | Gabon, Libya & Nigeria | Oil & Natural Gas (105.4 m) |
| | Coromandel | Tunisia | Fertilizers (97.5 m) |
| | Indian Hotels Company | South Africa | Hospitality (93.8 m) |
| | Gujarat State Fertilizer Corporation | Tunisia | Fertilizers (92.9 m) |
| | Varun Beverages | Morocco, Zambia | Beverages (74.7 m) |
| | TATA Steel | South Africa | Manufacturing (65.3 m) |
| | TATA International | South Africa | Manufacturing (63.0 m) |
| | TATA Power | Zambia | Power generation (48.8 m) |

Source: Chakrabarty, 2018, p. 8-11.

While the leading companies mostly operate in the oil and gas, ferrous metals and manufacturing sectors, there is an increasing number of Indian companies that are tapping into the continent's agricultural sector.

Table 2: Selected Indian Companies with Investment in the Agricultural Sector in Africa

| S/No | Country | Indian Company | Details |
|------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Ethiopia | Karuturi Agro Products Plc | Acquired 100,000 ha in the Jakao and Itang districts of Gambela region for growing palm, with conditional option to acquire another 200,000 hectares |
| 2 | Rwanda | Mcleod Russel | Owens five tea estates in Uganda and two estates in Rwanda |
| 3 | Ethiopia | Ruchi Soya Industries | Acquired 25 Years lease for soybean and processing unit on 152,649 ha in Gambela and Benishangul Gumaz States |
| 4 | Ethiopia | Chadha Agro Plc | Acquired up to 100,000 hectares in Guji zone in Oromia Regional State for a sugar development project |
| 5 | Gabon | Olam International | Acquired 30,000 hectares in Gabon for palm oil |
| 6 | Rwanda & Uganda | Jay Shree Tea & Industries | Acquired two tea plantations in Rwanda and one in Uganda |
| 7 | DR Congo & Ethiopia | ACIL Cotton Industries | Plans to invest nearly USD15 million (Rs. 6 8 crore) for land leases to start contract farming pulses and coffee |
| 8 | Ethiopia | Neha International | Leased land in Oromia region-in Holetta for floriculture and near Bako for rice, maize, oilseeds, and pulses |
| 9 | Mozambique | Nirmal Seeds Mozambique | Leased or purchased 2,000 hectares of land in 2013 |
| 10 | Madagascar | Varun International | Varun Agriculture Sari leased or purchased 232,000 hectares to grow rice, corn, and pulses |
| 11 | Ethiopia | Sannati Agro Farm Enterprise Pv. Ltd. | Acquired 25 years lease on 10,000 hectares in Dimi District, Gambela region, for cultivation of rice, pulses, and cereals |
| 12 | Ethiopia | Vedanta Harvests Plc | Acquired a 50 years lease for 5,000 hectares in the Gambela region for a tea and spice plantation |

Source: India Exim Bank (2019). Feed Africa: Achieving progress through partnership. *Working Paper*, No. 63. New Delhi: Export-Import Bank of India. Compiled by Viswanathan and Mishra, 2019: 26.

The depth and reach of India's trade relations with Africa is demonstrated by the astronomical growth in the volumes of imports and exports between the two trading partners. There has been some serious growth in the volume of bilateral trade relations between India and Africa in terms of US dollar value. It grew from USD 7.2billion in 2001 to a peak of USD 78billion in 2014, before falling to USD 59.9billion in 2017. Accounting for India's rising imports from Africa were primarily minerals and energy needed to fuel India's increasing industrialization (Afreximbank & Exim Bank, India, 2018, p. 19). As India seek to diversify its energy imports away from South Asia, Africa's resource-rich states have readily become alternatives. India's oil imports from Africa, mainly Angola and Nigeria, stood at 18 percent of India's total imports from Africa. Aside from crude oil, India also imports coal from South Africa and Mozambique, natural gas from Algeria, Nigeria and Egypt, while Malawi, Namibia, Niger, and South Africa are important sources of uranium (Chakrabarty, 2016, p. 269). To that end, the fall in the dollar value of trade from the peak of US\$ 78billion in 2014 to USD 59.9billion in 2017 was a result of the fall in global commodities prices especially that of fossil fuels and ferrous metals and alloys and not necessarily a fall in the volume of trade.

Table 3: Volume of Trade between India and Africa 2008-2017 (US\$ billion)

| Year | India's Export to Africa | India's Import from Africa |
|------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2001 | 2.8 | 4.4 |
| 2002 | 3.0 | 5.2 |
| 2003 | 3.7 | 4.6 |
| 2004 | 4.9 | 5.7 |
| 2005 | 6.7 | 8.4 |
| 2006 | 9.5 | 13.4 |
| 2007 | 12.4 | 17.1 |
| 2008 | 15.4 | 26.8 |
| 2009 | 13.3 | 21.0 |
| 2010 | 17.9 | 31.5 |
| 2011 | 23.3 | 41.9 |
| 2012 | 27.3 | 43.3 |
| 2013 | 34.1 | 40.6 |
| 2014 | 34.6 | 43.4 |
| 2015 | 25.6 | 36.3 |
| 2016 | 22.6 | 27.0 |
| 2017 | 23.8 | 36.0 |

Source: Afreximbank and Exim Bank, India, 2018, p. 24

Table 4: Trends in India-Africa Trade (US\$ Billion) 2001-2017

| Year | India's Exports to Africa | India's Imports from Africa | India's Total Trade with Africa | India's Trade Balance with Africa |
|-----------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2011 | 2.8 | 4.4 | 7.2 | -1.5 |
| 2002 | 3.0 | 5.2 | 8.2 | -2.1 |
| 2003 | 3.7 | 4.6 | 8.3 | -1.0 |
| 2004 | 4.9 | 5.7 | 10.6 | -0.9 |
| 2005 | 6.7 | 8.4 | 15.1 | -1.7 |
| 2006 | 9.5 | 13.4 | 22.9 | -4.0 |
| 2007 | 12.4 | 17.1 | 29.5 | -4.6 |
| 2008 | 15.4 | 26.8 | 42.2 | -11.4 |
| 2009 | 13.3 | 21.0 | 34.3 | -7.7 |
| 2010 | 17.9 | 31.5 | 49.4 | -13.7 |
| 2011 | 23.3 | 41.9 | 65.3 | -18.6 |
| 2012 | 27.3 | 43.3 | 70.6 | -16.0 |
| 2013 | 34.1 | 40.6 | 74.7 | -6.5 |
| 2014 | 34.6 | 43.4 | 78.0 | -8.8 |
| 2015 | 25.6 | 36.3 | 62.0 | -10.7 |
| 2016 | 22.6 | 27.0 | 49.6 | -4.4 |
| 2017 | 23.8 | 36.0 | 59.9 | -12.2 |
| 2018-2019 | 22.65 | 35.40 | 58.05 | -12.75 |
| 2019-2020 | 23.55 | 32.15 | 55.70 | -8.6 |
| 2020-2021 | 22.93 | 23.89 | 46.82 | -0.96 |

Source: Afreximbank and Exim Bank, India, 2018, p. 24.

Source: Data on trade relations for the financial years 2018/2019 to the 2020/2021 was sourced from Government of India, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Commerce, Foreign Trade (Africa) official website available at <https://commerce.gov.in/about-us/divisions/foreign-trade-territorial-division/foreign-trade-africa/> accessed on 12th January 2022.

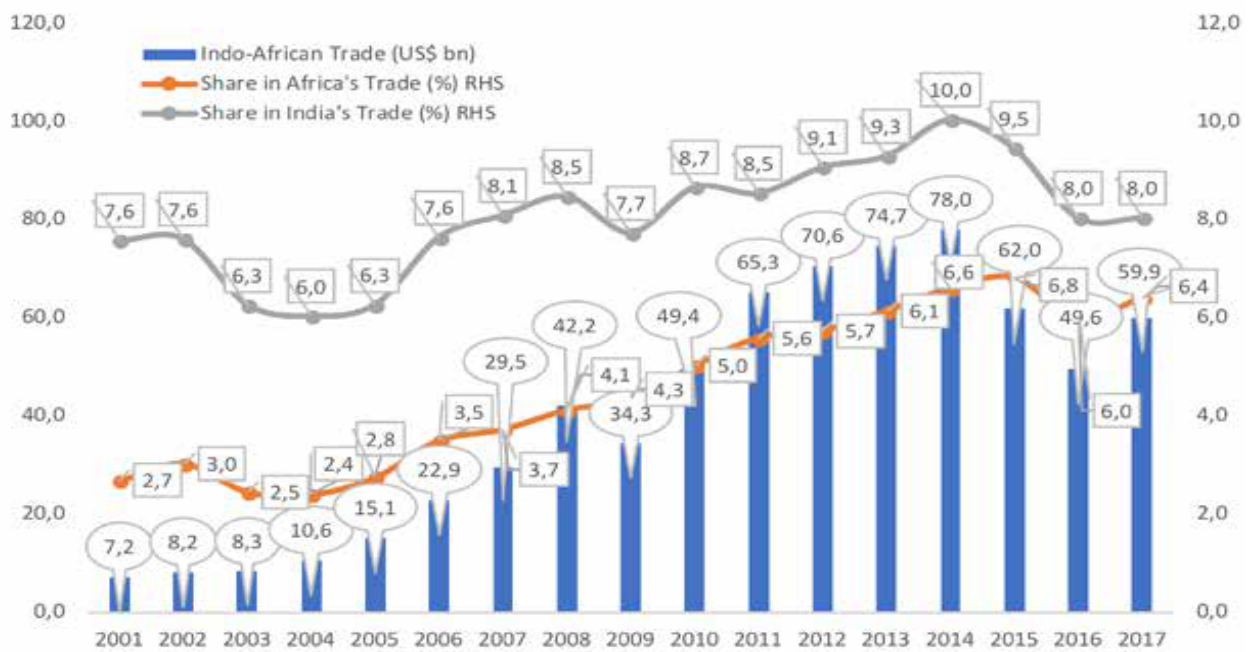
Table 5: India-Africa Trade and its Share in Total Trade of India and Africa

| Year | Total India-Africa Trade in US\$Billion | Percentage (%) Share in Africa's Annual Total Trade | Percentage (%) Share in India's Annual Total Trade |
|------|---|---|--|
| 2001 | 7.2 | 2.7 | 7.6 |
| 2002 | 8.2 | 3.0 | 7.6 |
| 2003 | 8.3 | 2.5 | 6.3 |
| 2004 | 10.6 | 2.4 | 6.0 |
| 2005 | 15.1 | 2.8 | 6.3 |
| 2006 | 22.9 | 3.5 | 7.6 |
| 2007 | 29.5 | 3.7 | 8.1 |
| 2008 | 42.2 | 4.1 | 8.5 |
| 2009 | 34.3 | 4.3 | 7.7 |
| 2010 | 49.4 | 5.0 | 8.7 |
| 2011 | 65.3 | 5.6 | 8.5 |
| 2012 | 70.6 | 5.7 | 9.1 |
| 2013 | 74.7 | 6.1 | 9.3 |
| 2014 | 78.0 | 6.6 | 10.0 |
| 2015 | 62.0 | 6.8 | 9.5 |
| 2016 | 49.6 | 6.0 | 8.0 |
| 2017 | 59.9 | 6.4 | 8.0 |

Source: Afreximbank and Exim Bank, India, 2018, p. 24

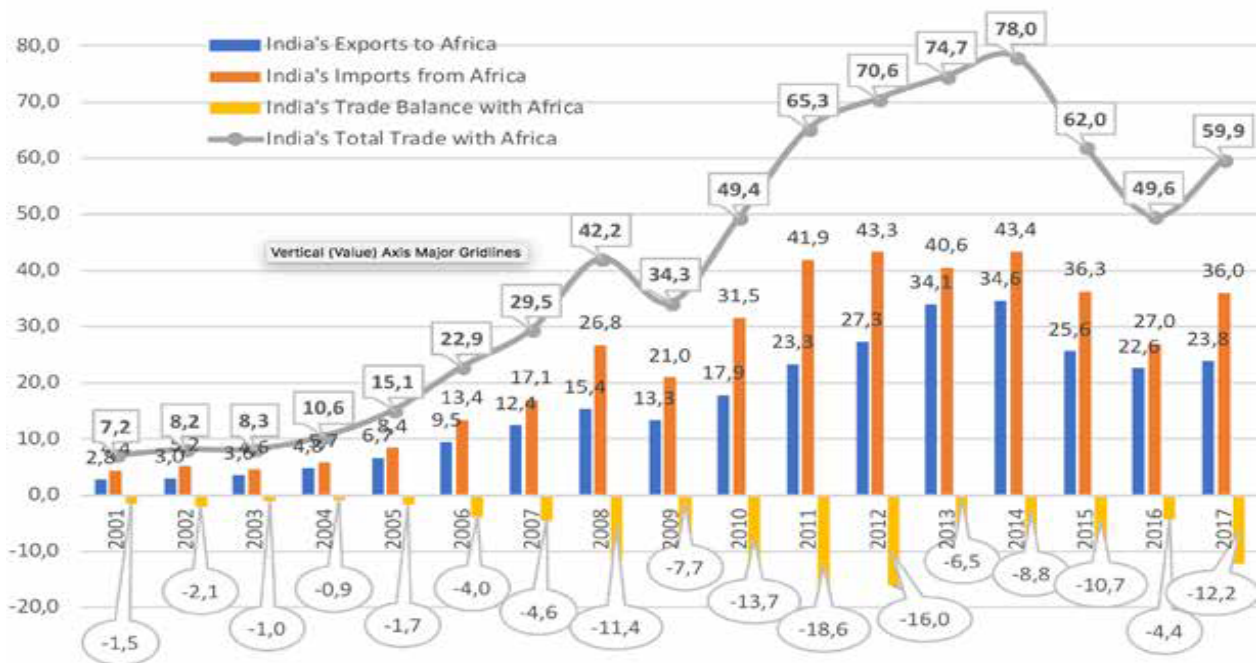
While bilateral trade relationship between India and Africa has witnessed tremendous growth, it is important to indicate that the growth did not just come naturally. The rise in trade and investment relations between India and Africa emanated from conscious policies and initiatives directed at enhancing bilateral trade relations between the two partners. Notable among the initiatives put in place for this purpose are the 'Focus Africa' initiative launched in March 2002 by the Indian government; the Duty-Free Tariff Preference Scheme for the Least Developed Countries developed by the Indian government in 2008; the India-Africa Summits and the Private Sector-Led Conclaves. These policy programmes and initiatives have largely been responsible for the rise in bilateral trade flows and investment relationships that have been witnessed between India and Africa especially in the last two decades (Afreximbank & Exim Bank, India, 2018, p. 23). The steady increase in the value of the volume of trade and the term of trade between India and Africa as shown in tables 3 and 4 was largely a reflection of the growth in trade relations between the two partners. The growth has also reflected in the steady increase in India trade with Africa as a percentage of India's annual total global trade and the corresponding increase in Africa trade with India as a percentage of Africa's total global annual trade as highlighted in table 5 above. The India-Africa trade and its share in total trade of India and Africa and the trends in India and Africa trade relations presented in tables above are depicted in figures 1 and 2 below.

Figure 1: India-Africa Trade and its Share in Total Trade of India and Africa



Source: Afrexim-India Exim, 2018, p. 24.

Figure 2: Trends in India-Africa Trade (US\$ billion)



Source: Afrexim-India Exim, 2018, p. 24.

While India's trade and investments relations with Africa have ballooned over the decades, there is still an opportunity for expansion and improvement. Of the twenty-two countries listed as India's largest trade partners with the value of trade (sum of imports and exports) running into billions of US dollars for the financial year 2019-2020, only two African countries featured. Listed as the Twelfth India's largest trade partner is Nigeria with India's export to Nigeria standing at 3.61 billion USD, import from Nigeria was put at 10.21 billion USD, total trade at 13.82 billion USD and trade balance

in Nigeria's favour standing at 6.6 billion USD. The other Africa country on the list was South Africa with the value of India's export to the country put at 4.11 billion USD, the value of India import put at 6.97 billion USD, total trade estimated at 11.08 billion USD and trade balance in South Africa's favour standing at 2.86 billion USD (Government of India, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Commerce, 2022).

Notwithstanding the above, some countries in Africa have also emerged as major exporters to India and this can also be seen as an indicator of the increasing trade relation between India and African countries. However, the increasing dependence of these countries on India as export outlet for their commodities can be problematic in the long term, and the same can be said for India. Notwithstanding the rising dependence and other issues constraining India-Africa trade relationship, exports to India accounted for 6.4 percent of total African trade by 2017. India's rise to become Africa's fourth most important trading partner is a testament to the strength, vitality and dynamism of Indo-African trade, investment and diplomatic relationships. A relationship that is only surpassed by that of China and Africa.

Table 6: Africa Countries Listed among India's Largest Trading Partners with their total trade (sum of imports and exports) in US\$ Dollars for the financial year 2019-2020

| Rank | Country | Exports | Imports | Total Trade | Trade Balance |
|------|--------------|---------|---------|-------------|---------------|
| 1 | Nigeria | 3.61 | 10.21 | 13.82 | -6.6 |
| 2 | South Africa | 4.11 | 6.97 | 11.08 | -2.86 |

Source: Government of India, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Commerce, 2022.

Table 7: Africa Countries that are Primary Export Partners of India (Export to India as Percentage of Country's Total Exports)

| Rank | Country | Percentage |
|------|---------------|------------|
| 2 | Guinea-Bissau | 67.1% |
| 5 | Nigeria | 30.6% |
| 6 | Mozambique | 28.1% |
| 7 | Ghana | 23.8% |
| 8 | Tanzania | 21.8% |

Source: CIA World Factbook 2017.

The volume of India's development cooperation with Africa has also witnessed rapid growth and starting from 2003, India has deployed the Concessional Lines of Credit (LoC) as a key instrument for the delivery of development partnership. This partnership is intended for funding the construction of railway lines, electrification and irrigation projects, farm mechanization projects among others in a mutually benefitting manner. The LoC financing is mutually beneficial because it boosts infrastructural funding for recipient countries while creating new markets for Indian companies and build relations with countries that are important sources of food, energy and resources for the Indian economy and the state (Chakrabarty, 2021). India has sanctioned 182 LoC projects in 41 African countries through the Export Import (EXIM) Bank of India with a total fund commitment running into 11 billion US dollars (Viswanathan & Mishra, 2019; Chakrabarty, 2018; India Exim Bank, 2017-18). This represents 42 percent of the total amount of LoCs offered by the Indian government through the Exim Bank of India.

Table 8: Government of India: Lines of Credit Statistics to Africa Countries for 2018-2019

| S/No | Year of Approval | Region | Country | Borrower | Amount of Credit (in USD mn) | Purpose | Date of signing of LoC |
|------|------------------|--------|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|---|------------------------|
| 1 | 2018-19 | Africa | Burundi | Government of Burundi | 161.36 | Construction of Parliament building in Gitega and ministerial Buildings in Burundi | 02-07-2019 |
| 2 | 2018-19 | Africa | Central African Republic | Government of CAR | 7.00 | 1. Capitalisation of all interest, penal interest and commitment fees overdue under the LOC of USD 29.50 million and future interest and other dues falling due under the LOC of USD 29.50 million till September 15, 2024. 2. Capitalisation of all future interest and other dues falling due under the new LOC of USD 20.00 million till January 16, 2023 | 16-08-2018 |
| 3 | 2018-19 | Africa | Chad | Government of Chad | 6.12 | [i] Capitalisation of all interest, penal interest and commitment fee overdue under the LOC of USD 50 million and future interest and other dues falling due under the LOC of USD 50 million till June 2020, into new LOC of USD 6.12 million. [ii] Capitalisation of all future interest and other dues falling due under the new LOC of USD 15.90 million till December 23, 2023, into new LOC of USD 6.12 million. | 27-04-2018 |
| 4 | 2018-19 | Africa | D.R. Congo | Government of DR. Congo | 33.29 | Financing installation of 15 MW solar photovoltaic power project at Karawa, province – North Ubangi, Democratic Republic of Congo. | 17-03-2019 |
| 5 | 2018-19 | Africa | DR. Congo | Government of DR. Congo | 25.27 | Financing installation of 10 MW solar photovoltaic power project at Lusambo, province – Sankuru, Democratic Republic of Congo | 17-03-2019 |
| 6 | 2018-19 | Africa | DR. Congo | Government of DR. Congo | 24.55 | Financing installation of 10 MW solar photovoltaic power project at Mbandaka, Province – Equator | 17-03-2019 |
| 7 | 2018-19 | Africa | Malawi | Government of Malawi | 215.68 | Drinking Water Supply Schemes and Other Development Projects | 12-06-2020 |

| | | | | | | | |
|----|---------|--------|------------|--------------------------|---------------|---|------------|
| 8 | 2018-19 | Africa | Mozambique | Government of Mozambique | 95.00 | Procurement of railway rolling stock including locomotives, coaches and wagons. | 23-07-2018 |
| 9 | 2018-19 | Africa | Rwanda | Government of Rwanda | 100.00 | Development of two SEZs & expansion of the Kigali SEZ | 23-07-2018 |
| 10 | 2018-19 | Africa | Rwanda | Government of Rwanda | 100.00 | Three Agriculture Project Schemes i.e. (i) Warufu Multipurpose Irrigation Project, (ii) Mugesera Irrigation Project, and (iii) Nyamukana Irrigation Project | 23-07-2018 |
| | | | | Total | 840.77 | | |

Source: India Exim Bank (2018-19). Government of India-Line of Credits Statistics.

While it is clear that India has an intrinsic interest in helping Africa achieve progress; it is important to acknowledge that the benefits accruable from robust India-Africa relationships is mutually benefitting. The spirit of developing together as equals defines the India-Africa bilateral relations. A resurging Africa and a rising India can offer strong impetus to the strengthening of South-South cooperation, especially when it comes to addressing challenges in areas like clean technology, climate-resilient agriculture, maritime security, connectivity, and Blue economy. Despite the upward swings, it is, however, important to highlight that the India-Africa relationship has not achieved its full potential. What is needed to take the partnership between India and Africa to the next level in a post-Covid-19 environment is the infusion of energy, of something new and concrete, and with a specific focus and direction (Viswanathan & Mishra, 2019).

On the security front, India's military institutions and training centres has hosted military personnel from national armed forces across Africa especially in the 1960s and 1970s. In recent times, India has been helping to develop military training facilities in some African states. India has continued to deepen its security cooperation and engagement with states in Southern and Eastern Africa. For some years, the Indian Navy has engaged in patrol duties and in operations directed at enhancing unhindered vessels navigation in the Indian Ocean. And more importantly, India has for long been a major supporter and leading troops contributor to United Nations Peacekeeping missions. A sizeable number of Indian troops and military personnel have served the cause of peace in Africa on the platform of United Nations peacekeeping missions.

Open for Business: Re-calibrating India-Africa's Relationship in a Post-Covid-19 World

Although the Corona Virus was slow to reach Africa, the economic impacts of the pandemic were quick to manifest. As traded volumes of commodities and raw materials took a nosedive and prices plunged, African economies that were heavily dependent on export earnings took a serious hit. In the same vein, as the global economy grounded due to the pandemic, the continent's growing, though largely informal, service-based economies were forced to close down in order to pre-empt the spread of the virus. The closure of national economies, coupled with a dip in the price of commodities, was a serious blow to Africa. Before the Covid-19 pandemic induced a global shutdown, economies across Africa were experiencing unprecedented growth. Indeed, the African region accounted for many of the world's fastest-growing emerging market economies (Brookings Institute, 2021). Likewise, India's economy had posted consistent growth before the pandemic, making it one of the fastest growing economies in the world (World Bank, 2021). Thus, India and Africa have much to gain in close cooperation in a post Covid-19 world. To this end, the need to grow and deepen India-Africa cooperation and engagement as the world gradually reopen for business becomes critical for the growth and progress of African economies and by extension that of India.

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic had given India the opportunity to further demonstrate her commitment to South-South cooperation. India's approach to diplomatic relations since the outbreak of the crisis can be said to be commendable. One of the first steps taken by India was to evacuate citizens of different countries along with her citizens from Wuhan, China, the epi-centre of the first Covid-19 outbreak. This was a big relief given the complexity that characterized evacuation from Wuhan following the Chinese government's imposition of strict lockdown on the region and the urgency of the need for such evacuation. Those evacuated on compassionate grounds and in the context of what was to emerge as Covid-19 diplomacy included citizens from Indian Ocean Region (IOR) countries notably Bangladesh, Myanmar, the Maldives, South Africa, and Madagascar.

In the context of 'vaccine diplomacy', India supplied the anti-malaria drug hydroxychloroquine or HCQ to the USA, Brazil and Israel, and many more countries (Akash, 2020; Nera & Sumit, 2020; Rezaul, 2020). This was done in the context of medical claims that Hydroxychloroquine, HCQ alone

or when combined with azithromycin can be used to treat patients with mild to moderate Covid-19 infection. Irrespective of the controversies that characterized numbers of medical remedies of which the HCQ efficacy was the most contentious and the debunking of the effectiveness of the combination for the treatment of Covid-19, it was to India's advantage that it responded swiftly to request for the drugs and was able to use this to boost her soft power diplomacy in the context of the pandemic response. More importantly, on vaccine diplomacy, India has been forthcoming with the promise to give support and assistance to global efforts on vaccination. India made an initial promise to supply 200 million doses of the AstraZeneca (AZ)-Oxford vaccines (COVISHIELD) licensed and manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII) under the auspices of Covid-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) arrangement. A sizeable proportion of Sub-Saharan African countries depend on the COVAX programme for their vaccines needs (Toulemonde, 2021). However, recent policies and media pronouncements coming from government officials in major vaccine manufacturing countries are raising concerns and fears about the emergence of 'vaccine nationalism' (Evenett, Hoekman, Rocha & Ruta, 2021; Toulemonde, 2021).

Being a member of the 'privilege club' of Covid-19 vaccines producing countries, statements from Indian government officials and the Chief Executive Officer of the Serum Institute of India, indicating government directives to restrict the export of AstraZeneca vaccine to secure needed doses for India's national vaccination programme had raised fears that the government was embarking on a 'vaccine nationalism' among trading partners and African countries that had pinned their hopes of sourcing Covid-19 vaccines from India. The tweet by Mr Ponnawalla that the Serum Institute, 'has been directed to prioritize the huge needs of India and along with that balance the needs of the rest of the world' and his plea that foreign governments exercise 'patience' did little to assuage fears of export restriction and impeding vaccine nationalism (Evenett, Hoekman, Rocha & Ruta, 2021, p. 6-7). However, it is important to note that, following these initial hiccups, there had been a surge in production and deliveries to partners largely on a humanitarian and diplomatic drive at the bilateral level and within the context of the COVAX programme. Indeed, Indian experts and analysts are now quick to tout the success of the nation's vaccine diplomacy (Surie, 2021). Whether the euphoria that characterised their positions and sense of national pride align with realities is a different issue for discussion.

In fairness, there is a need to understand the position of India to prioritize and secure doses for local needs amid the rampage of Covid-19 infections since the beginning of 2021. It is also important to state that India was not alone in trying to restrict export with the intent to secure doses for national use. Indeed, the first salvo on export restrictions and impending 'vaccine nationalism' was shot by the European Union, while China and the United States have also battled balancing national needs with global needs. That said, it is important to underline the fact that, an attempt at export restriction and any semblance of 'vaccine nationalism' will do irreparable damage to India's soft power diplomacy especially in Africa. To this end, officials and policy experts in New Delhi had to find a balance between securing national needs for AstraZeneca and Covax in doses and the vaccines needs of important partners in Africa and the rest of the global south. How well they balance nationalism against internationalism as it relates to vaccine diplomacy might be very important for post-Covid-19 Indian diplomacy.

As the world embarks on a cautious re-opening, managers of India's foreign policy in New Delhi and across her missions in Africa need to evolve new policy of engagements that can better strengthen existing lines of communication between India and various capitals across the continent. In this sense, the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) initiative that was intended to be jointly implemented with Japan can become the flagship of India diplomatic relations with the continent in the post-Covid-19 era. The Asia-Africa Growth Corridor was largely conceived as a policy response to the Chinese

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The conception of the initiative as a programme that will be jointly implemented with Japan might signal India's new strategic alliance in Asia directed at countering China's Belt and Road Initiative in the India Ocean Region in particular and broadly in Sub-Sahara Africa. According to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the AAGC was to serve as a diplomatic and investment vehicle directed at achieving closer developmental cooperation between India, Japan and Africa. Announced in May 2017 during the 52nd Annual Meeting of the African Development Bank (AfDB) summit held at Gandhinagar, India, the initiative had not taken off before the pandemic struck. To this end, if given the needed political, diplomatic and resource commitment from New Delhi and Tokyo, the AAGC can become India's launch-pad to Africa in the post-Covid-19 era (Chunhao, 2018; Prakash, 2018; Panda, 2017; RIS, ERIA & IDE-JITRO, 2017).

Envisioned as the main vehicle for driving India-Japan's cooperation with Africa, the vision statement of the AAGC was directed at achieving four strategic objectives. These are; development and cooperation; 'quality infrastructure' and digital and institutional connectivity; enhancing capabilities and skills; and establishing a people-to-people partnership. In a broader term, the grand objective of the initiative is to push growth and interconnectedness between Asia and Africa. This agenda is expected to be strongly anchored on people to people mutually benefitting cooperative engagements and partnerships (Chunhao, 2018; Prakash, 2018; Panda, 2017; RIS, ERIA & IDE-JITRO, 2017). Intended to connect Africa with all the sub-regions in Asia, Africa occupies the position of primacy within the framework of the AAGC.

However, it is important to note that as attractive as the vision of the Asia Africa Growth Corridor might have been, its success will largely depend on the political will and commitment of leaders from India and Japan and how well they push the objectives of the initiative. The change of leadership in Japan following the exiting of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the ascension of Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga is critical as this change of guard might have informed the lack of activities as it relates to the discussion on how to move forward to the implementation stage of the plan of action between prime ministers Modi and Suga (Tanigushi, 2020). It is also important to note that the arrangement suffers from one major drawback that had largely characterized India's engagement with Africa, that of the narrow focus on the Indian Ocean contiguous countries in Southern and Eastern Africa. While one notes the strategic importance of the India Ocean Region to India's foreign policy and thus her deeper connections with Southern and Eastern Africa countries that fall within that orbit, that special relations should not necessarily translate to the neglect of other sub-regions within the continent. Thus, the crafting of India's foreign policy in the post-Covid-19 era needs to pay attention to this drawback especially if and when the implementation of the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor programme commences.

Another concern relating to the implementation of the AAGC and on whether the initiative can serve the purpose for which it was crafted is the extent of the resources that India and her partner Japan are willing and able to commit to the programmes and agendas set out in the AAGC document. Intending that the AAGC should serve as a counterweight to China's BRI is one thing, having the deep pocket of China and being able to muster the will to commit huge resources to the project like China has and continue to commit to Africa is another thing altogether. This becomes imperative given India's own competing resources needs at home and within her main sphere of influence, the Indian Ocean Region. Thus, it is doubtful whether the AAGC can have the depth and reach of China's BRI within the IOR and ultimately in Africa.

As vaccination programmes get underway across the world, the expectation is that the global economy will cautiously and gradually reopen for business. While India, is currently battling a resurging Covid-19 infection with devastating impacts; the nation has the resources and expertise to counter the renewed surge. It is also important to note that India will be embarking on the

most extensive vaccination programme in its history. If these are taken into consideration, it can be projected that India has the potential to reverse the surge and reopen for business as early as 2022. Before the pandemic hit, the Indian economy was the fastest growing in the world, outperforming the Chinese economy even though in comparative terms it remains smaller. As for Africa, the continent remains the most endowed with natural resources deposits especially fossil fuels and precious metals/alloys. Before the pandemic, Africa also housed the highest numbers of the fastest-growing emerging market economies. With a long history of diplomatic ties and rising trade, commercial and investment relations with the BRICS economies, of which India is a member, Africa and India already have the foundation on which the two parties can build as the global economy enter a post-pandemic phase (Hopin, 2021).

Before the outbreak of the pandemic and the forced lockdown of the global economy, India-Africa trade was valued at USD62 billion in 2018. This might seem smaller when compared to the volumes of Sino-Africa trade at the same period that was valued at USD204.19 billion according to data from the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China. But this figure was at variance with the USD 185 billion recorded for the same period by the John Hopkins University's China-Africa Research Initiative (John Hopkins University, 2021; Ministry of Commerce People's Republic of China, 2019). Irrespective of the figures that one intends to go with, what is incontrovertible is that China is far ahead of India as it relates to the volume and value of trade with Africa. That said, it is important to note that when compared with the volume of Indo-Africa trade valued at USD39 billion a decade earlier in 2010, the volume and value of trade between India and Africa has witnessed tremendous growth. The import of the data provided above was to demonstrate the commendable progress in the pace of Indo-Africa trade and this provides the foundation upon which trade and commercial relations between the two will be built, as the world reopen from Covid-19 imposed lockdown.

India still relies extensively on the Middle East to meet her energy need, with 80 percent of her oil and gas imports coming from that region. However, with India's increasing push for diversification of sources and determination to reduce dependence on the Middle East exporters, Africa's oil and gas producing nations are poised to gain a new customer in India. Before the pandemic hit, Africa's share of India's imports has been on the increase. In 2020, India imported 34 million tonnes of oil from Africa amounting to 15 percent of the nation's total import for the year. In the same vein, Africa's share of India's LNG import was also on the ascendancy. Africa's traditional exporters of oil and gas to India include; Nigeria, Angola, Algeria, Egypt and Equatorial Guinea. New suppliers in recent years include; Cameroon, Chad, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. With new LNG projects in Mozambique and Tanzania coming on stream, Africa's share of India's energy imports is likely going to increase (The Economic Times Newspaper, 2021).

As the world cautiously reopen, the oil and gas sector across Africa's established and emerging producers will be hoping to attract investments from abroad to help the continent jump-start national economies. This can in turn provide opportunities for India National Oil Company and private entities operating in the sector to engage in targeted direct investments on the continent's oil and gas sectors.

Given that Africa will continue to need technological expertise (inclusive of technology transfer) and investment to see to the realization of new projects in the oil and gas sector (upstream and refining), this will provide opportunities for India to leverage on and deepen relationships, especially with emerging energy producers on the East Coast of Africa. Strategic engagements in this all-important sector can become the linchpin for a robust post-pandemic India's re-engagement with Africa in the energy sector. Such partnership will provide win-win outcomes as it has the potential to aid India's energy diversification drive and enhance Africa's ability to return to a sustainable growth path. India can also leverage on her deep bilateral commercial, trade and investment engagements with select

countries like Angola, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa before the global lockdown in re-energizing her post-pandemic strategic relationships with Africa.

For instance, building on existing business links in Nigeria, India can deepen her trade relationships with the country and by extension West Africa, through expanding her footprints in telecommunications, pharmaceuticals, heavy machinery among others. In the automotive sector, Indian businesses can deepen engagement with Africa's market through the opening of new vehicle manufacturing and assembly plants, especially for cheaper compact cars. Business and investment opportunities also exist for Indian national corporations and Indian businesses to tap into in the area of agriculture, medicines and tele-medicines, information technology and similar other sectors.

Conclusion

Although the Covid-19 pandemic was slow to reach Africa, its negative impact on the continent's poorly resourced health sector was immediate. As resources and medical expertise were redirected to fight the pandemic, other pressing health issues suffered neglect. There was also the undesirable psychological effect on people induced by the hard lockdown measures necessitated by the pandemic. More than these areas, the pandemic has dealt a severe blow to the continent's economies, slowing down the pace of growth, and erasing the gains of decades of consistent progress. As for India, the pandemic has also been highly devastating in terms of its impacts on the Indian population, the health sector that is struggling to cope with the surge of Covid-19, and the nation's economy had also taken a serious hit. Indeed, while the pandemic seems to have been relatively contained in Africa, the reverse has been the case for India, with the country witnessing a devastating surge in infection rates and recorded deaths. Notwithstanding the grim outlook, India has the medical expertise, resources and organizational resilience to weather the storm.

India has been highly instrumental in assisting partner nations in the efforts to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. The country assisted its partners with the emergency medical evacuation of nationals from Wuhan; supplied millions of Hydroxychloroquine to partners based on requests, was a pivot for the supply of Covid-19 vaccines to the COVAX initiative, and India manufacturers are also supplying their Covid-19 vaccines to other countries via bilateral and business agreements. As countries across the world initiate cautious re-opening, India and Africa have much to gain from each other as they attempt to re-start their economies. India will need the immense natural resources of Africa to drive her economic growth after the pandemic, while Africa will need the expertise, technology and investments from India in order to galvanize post-Covid-19 economic growth. To achieve their mutual objectives of post-pandemic economic recovery, India and Africa can draw on centuries-old history of engagements and relationships. As Vaidyanathan (2021) notes, while one cannot discountenance the fact that India has huge domestic obligations to deal with; partnering with Africa to weather the storm of economic revival post-Covid-19 will add immense value to the rich historicity of the India-Africa relations.

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